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MATTERS THEATRIC.

Almost all theatre and opera goers are familiar with the play of the "Fools Revenge," in which Mr. Booth has appeared during the present week, in some form or another, either as the opera of "Rigoletto," the original French drama of "Le Roi S'Amore" or the version by Tom Taylor, being played at the Winter Garden. It is a dismal and disagreeable affair at best, the main incident is one that shocks our better feelings of humanity, while the hero, Bertuccio, is so repulsive a character, that even with his great wrongs, it is next to impossible to sympathize with him in the slightest degree. In addition to this Mr. Taylor has done his work clumsily, and the play up to the last act is uncommonly stupid and uninteresting; we have to wade through a cumbersome mass of incidents, which utterly fail in exciting a sensation of any sort, and it is not until the last grand scene that the spectator is inspired with either enthusiasm or satisfaction. This last scene, however, makes up to some extent for the earlier portions of the play, being highly wrought and intensely powerful in its workings up and climax.—Bertuccio, goaded by revenge, has led the Duke to the house of his enemy Malatesta, and holds the ladder, while his master mounts and abducts, as he supposes, the wife of the grandee; by an unforeseen issue of accidents this proves to be his daughter, Fiordelisa, and it is not until she is safely in the clutches of the lustful Duke that the unhappy father discovers that he has assisted in the ruin of his own daughter instead of his enemy's wife.—Fiordelisa is locked in the chamber of the Duke, where, with a few congenial spirits he is celebrating with mirth and laughter his victory, and Bertuccio, having discovered his error, rushes to the door and demands admittance, he is refused, and is forced to stand without and listen to the ribaldry and scornful laughter of the lords within.

This, it will be seen, is a most powerfully tragic incident, and Mr. Taylor, one of the most experienced and practical of modern playwrights, has seized upon it with avidity, working up every point to the highest possible pitch of intensity, elaborating with dreadful earnestness the agony of the father, and in short, making a scene which for intensity of passion and power of dramatic situation is almost unparalleled in the annals of the modern stage.

Mr. Booth's Bertuccio is to my fancy, the gentleman's finest personation—from beginning to end it is one great masterpiece of art. Bertuccio's life is one continual falsehood, he apes the fool to assist him in the great end of his life—revenge,—and like Brutus of old, cares but little for the scoffs and revilings of his fellow men so long as he attains the object in view. Mr. Booth, taking this conception, carries it most wonderfully—his quips and cranks, his merry jokes, and biting sarcasms, his exaggerated walk, his antic and awkward postures in presence of the dissolute lords, are all admirable and fully convey the idea of the author, while in the tender passages of the play, where, freed from the restraint of the court, he seeks comfort and consolation in the arms of his fair daughter, he displays a pathos and gentleness of manner which are exquisitely

touching and impressive. Here we have the despised jester in a truer, purer light; softened by the kind, loving words of his child he forgets for the nonce the wicked passion of his life, and beneath the warmth of her sunny, tender smile, becomes the affectionate and doting old father and longs for the time when, his great revenge accomplished, he may flee from the court and its debasing influences, and seeking shelter in her arms, may become a purer and a better man. This scene, as I have before said, is rendered with great tenderness and feeling by Mr. Booth, but it is in the last act that he o'ertops himself and gives us acting that in the memory of a majority of play-goers has seldom been surpassed. His first burst of triumph, when he hears the rounds of revelry from the adjoining chamber and imagines that Ginevra, the wife of Malatesta, is closeted with the unprincipled Duke and his associates, his rage upon being refused admittance to the banquet chamber, his joy when the incensed Duchess, goaded on by hate and disappointed love, poisons the wine, and then his abject agony and remorse when he learns from the lips of Aquilla that it is his daughter and not Ginevra who is closeted within, his vain and futile attempts to force an entrance, the well dissimulated buffoonery with which he endeavors to cajole the entering lords to gain for him admission and then the last great burst of passion when, unable to endure the torture and agony longer, he beats against the door and crying aloud with broken voice that the wine is poisoned, bids the lords come forth and save themselves, are simply grand and work the spectator up to a pitch of uncontrollable excitement and enthusiasm. The man has come forth in his true colors—not the cringing, frowning jester but the father, big with his own wrongs and those of his child, and towers above the pigmy lords with his parental tenderness and affection.

The entire performance is by all odds the most thoroughly artistic Mr. Booth has yet given us; there is more thought, more careful elaboration of detail in it, than has characterised any of his former efforts, and while every point has been worked up to the highest pitch of passionate and natural acting, there is still, in the stronger scenes, when, throwing aside his disguise, the Jester assumes his true character and standing, a degree of abandon and power which renders the performance one that comes as near to perfection as one can ever hope to see on the modern stage.

The management of the Winter Garden should, in justice to themselves and the public, pay more attention to the "mounting" of the plays there represented; it is a disgrace to any respectable theatre to put so uniformly well acted a play as the "Fool's Revenge" on the stage in the slipshod way in which it is presented at this establishment.

The Worrell Sisters commenced an engagement at the Broadway Theatre on Monday evening of this week, opening in "Out to Nurse" and Brough's burlesque of "Camalzaman and Badora," which was presented in good style, with entirely new scenery and rich and appropriate costumes. When these three young ladies last played in New York they gave great promise of future excellence, but they have hardly realized

the hopes then excited. At that time they were clever and amusing but amateurish, and this fault seems to have stuck to them. In the place of improvement it would appear that they are satisfied with the reputation already attained, and have made little or no effort to perfect themselves in the art they have adopted. As very beautiful, piquant, and somewhat amusing actresses they may always attract notice, but as thorough artistes never.

SHUGGE.

MUSICAL GOSSIP.

London's New Philharmonic would appear to be in a thriving condition, for its "Hon. Sec." announces the commencement of their concerts next April, "in a new hall being built expressly for these concerts, entitled St. George's Hall, Langham Place, Regent Street."

The Sacred Harmonic Society of London are congratulated in their annual report upon having made £375 last year by their concerts, the receipts having been £5838 and the expenses £5463. That society was established in 1832 by a small body of amateurs for the practice chiefly of Handel's choruses and gradually assumed enlarged proportions. In 1846 a radical reform was made in its working machinery, and Mr. Surman its conductor from the commencement, gave place to another deemed more competent, but set up an opposition called The London Sacred Harmonic, which had a troubled and rather brief existence. Costa took hold of the original society in 1848 with such vigorous hand that new life was given it and ever since it has prospered remarkably. A critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette* praises highly the choral and orchestral performance of "Elijah" by that society last month, but excepts strongly to all the soloists but Santley, and even he, although conceded to be as perfect in the music of the Prophet, as a fine voice, unerring intonation, faultless accent, and steady phrasing can be, when combined with a marked absence of light and shade which is always a slight drawback to the effect of his singing—in so long and arduous a part as that of "Elijah," creates a certain sense of monotony. Tom Hohler is badly cut up by that critic both in the oratorios referred to and "The Messiah," while Mme. Sherrington is denied the mental gift or physical force requisite in some portions of the soprano part of "Elijah."

Gye has engaged Contogni, a baritone from Bologna, who is said to be a sterling singer, although his voice is not remarkable for power, and Petit, who did Mephistophiles at Le Lyrique very well, and since that has made a hit at Barcelona's Liceo, as "Assur." He also has secured Verdi's "Don Carlos" and Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet."

Mapleson has reengaged Tom Hohler.

Santley was announced to make his last appearance in oratorio at Exter Hall with the National Choral Society in "The Creation" for January 3d, thereafter making a three month's tour.

When Sims Reeves appeared in the second performance of "The Messiah," by the Sacred Harmonic Society, this season, he received a most enthusiastic greeting and his singing was so expressive, refined and masterly as to give additional emphasis to unanimous and hearty praise of England's "only tenor."

A critic in the London *Musical World* speaks of the second performance at Crystal Palace of Alexander's "Feast" in this wise: "Of the principal vocalists—Mme. Sherrington, Wilbye Cooper and Lewis Thomas—with the orchestra, I can speak in terms of unqualified praise but cannot say as much for the chorus, their singing being not only coarse and unsteady, but at times so palpably out of tune and time that the merest tyro in music could not possibly overlook their